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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Odessa/Hydrographics/Security Procedures/Shore Liberty/
Stevedores/Attitudes of People/Shipping/Port Facilities/
Military ActivityPLACE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)DATE ACQUIRED
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SOURCE Two UK nationals; crew members of a British merchant vessel when she was in Odessa for 23 days in January 1954.

Both sources are believed by the US Navy's interviewing officer to be better than average observers. One was very cooperative in the interview; the other at first refused to discuss Odessa on the grounds it might get him in trouble with his own government. However, he later volunteered considerable information, with the interviewing officer asking very few questions. The Navy's interviewing officer believes the information supplied by these sources is completely accurate to the best of their knowledge - although one source admittedly did not tell all he knew. Because the two sources did not disagree on any point, for purposes of convenience their information is presented as if it came from a single source.

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1. Approach to Odessa: Our ship, navigating by RDF, followed approximately the shortest direct course from the Bosphorus to Odessa. The ship deviated from this course only to avoid a World War II mine field which British sailing directions indicate is in the Odessa area. The ship had to break through ice as she neared Odessa, and she finally became icebound at approximately 46°30'00"N, 30°46'00"E. The ship was boarded here by port authorities who conducted an inspection and search and then left the ship. The ship drifted in the ice for nineteen days waiting for a berth to become available. Lack of berthing space, not ice, was the reason that the ship did not enter port sooner. When a berth was available, a pilot came aboard and the ship proceeded, without additional inspection, through the harbor entrance opposite Potapovski Mole and to her berth at Quarantine Mole at approximately 46°29'15"N, 30°45'22"E. The ship remained in port for four days.
2. Hydrographic Information: Cape Fontan Light - Although the ship passed within five miles of this light at night, both entering and leaving, the light was never sighted. Visibility was not good, but we probably would have seen the light if it had been burning. The first light sighted was Vorontsovski Light on the end of the breakwater.

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Buoy Missing - We never found the buoy indicated at 46°26'09"N, 30°49'30"E, on HO Chart 4202. Four other ships had previously reported the buoy missing. **Water depths** - Our ship drawing 27', found sufficient water at all times. A tanker drawing an estimated 30' was berthed at Quarantine Mole at 46°29'22"N, 30°45'26"E.

Mine Fields - The Dardanelles pilot and the Odessa pilot both stated that they did not know if the mine fields in the Odessa area were active or not. The Bosphorus pilot stated that he thought that the mine fields were inactive, but that he was not willing to risk taking a ship through the area.

Wrecks - Although HO Chart 4202 indicates that there are numerous wrecks inside the harbor, none were noted.

3. **Security Procedure:** The ship was boarded when she became icebound. The boarding party numbered about 12, including searchers, a female doctor, a female interpreter, and a female radio inspector. We believe the searchers were members of the immigration service, but we are not certain. During the search, which lasted about three hours, all personnel were mustered in one compartment. One man from each department accompanied the searchers while they searched his department's spaces. The searchers had side arms. They conducted themselves in a business-like manner. The searchers removed all binoculars, telescopes (including those in sextants), and cameras. The radio room was sealed. All non-Soviet currency was locked in the Master's safe. Private radios were not touched, although none of them aboard the ship had transmitting units. The persons of crew members were not searched. Prior to departure, a similar search was conducted alongside the quay. At this time, all items that had been removed from the ship were returned. While the ship was alongside the quay, guards were posted, on the quay, opposite the bow and stern and at the gangway. While the ship was unloading cargo, there was a guard posted in each hold. These guards were probably Army personnel, but we are not certain.
4. **Shore Liberty:** Crew members were free to go ashore unescorted. When going ashore, half of a pass was left with the guard at the gangway, and the other half was retained by the crew member. We were given a short drive around Odessa in the ship's agent's car. The purpose of the drive seemed to be to show us the few modern buildings that are scattered about the city. We got out of the automobile only at the railroad station. This station had been constructed ~~since~~ ^{since} World War II, and it was an excellent building by western standards. We spoke only with the interpreter who accompanied us. Most of the automobiles in Odessa seemed to be one of three types. We rode in one whose make we thought was "NVK". This seemed to be the medium class of car. There were some large cars that resembled the US Chrysler and a small type of car that had noticeably shoddy workmanship. US make trucks were noted in use. Odessa had about the same number of uniformed policemen that would be found in a comparable Western city. The policemen carried side arms.
5. **Stevedores and Longshoremen:** Longshoremen and stevedores worked very hard, but the Soviets seemed to try to get the ship's crew to do as much of the cargo handling work as possible. They asked that a crew member be assigned as a tally clerk in each hold from which cargo was being worked and on the quay opposite each such hold. Crew members were assigned to the holds, as requested, but none were assigned to the quay. Cargo was worked around the clock except for meal breaks. The checkers and fork lift drivers were women. The personnel of our ship could not understand how, if at all, the longshore and stevedore gangs were organized. Sometimes there would be a large number of stevedores working a hold, and sometimes there would be only a winch driver, a hatch tender, and a hold man. The same men seemed to work both on the ships and on the quay. There was no apparent change in shifts. The foreman of the stevedores tried to explain this by stating that the longshoremen and stevedores had a very strong union and that they were paid on a tonnage basis. He said that, if three men could do as much work as a full gang, they were allowed to do so in order to earn more money.

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6. Attitude of the People: The ship's crew talked little with the Soviets because of the language barrier. We talked only with officials, the ship's agent, the stevedore foreman, and interpreters. The people did not seem hostile, although they stared at the ship's crew, knowing from their dress that they were foreigners. The stevedore foreman, who spoke English, was quite amiable and seemed to have no fear of talking with the ship's crew.
7. Shipping:
 - a. General: The port seemed to be quite busy. There were apparently insufficient berths to handle efficiently the foreign merchant ships calling at Odessa, since our ship and some other foreign ships had to wait in the ice for some time before coming into the harbor. Soviet ships always entered the harbor without delay. All Soviet ship movements were at night. Ice breakers assisted the Soviet ships, but they did not assist any of the foreign ships. When there was a berth available for our ship, the pilot came out on a tug and our ship followed the path the tug had broken through the ice. Quarantine Harbor is the berthing area for foreign merchant ships.
 - b. Non-Soviet Ships: Before entering the harbor, our ship had to wait until a Port Line ship (British) finished unloading wool and meat at the same berth that our ship used. Our ship discharged wool. Two large Norwegian cargo ships were observed waiting in the ice near our ship. One had an "3" on its stack. Also in this area were two large Italian cargo ships, that seemed very old, and a small Greek coastal type cargo ship. The Norwegian flag refrigerator ship, MOSDALE, Mosvold Shipping Company, was icebound in this vicinity.
 - c. Soviet Non-Combatant Ships: There was a Soviet flag passenger-type ship, of about 17,000 gross tons, light grey in color, berthed near the end of Quarantine Mole. When this ship left, a Soviet flag tanker (the same tanker mentioned in paragraph two), of about 9,000 gross tons, drawing about 30', light grey in color, came to the berth and discharged to trucks and railroad tank cars. While our ship was icebound, several Soviet passenger-type ships entered or left the harbor. We saw four or five different Soviet passenger-type ships underway in the 19 days our ship was icebound. Some of these ships had army-type trucks as deck cargo. There were four or five Soviet ships at anchorage inside the breakwater. They were either tankers or large landing craft. Several small tankers were in Petroleum Harbor. No fishing boats were observed.
 - d. River Boats: There were river boats anchored stern to the breakwater along the breakwater that is opposite Military Mole and New Mole.
 - e. Ship Repair Activity: Four or five large Soviet cargo ships were being repaired in the repairing basin. Unlike the Soviet passenger-type ships and tankers, which were grey, these ships were black. Gun mounts were either being installed or removed from these cargo ships, since there were gun mounts both on the wharf and on the ships. There may have been a floating dry dock in this area.
8. Port Facilities: The wool discharged by our ship was stacked in the open on the quay. Some of it was covered with canvas, but some was left completely exposed to the weather. The quay and the railroad tracks on it appeared to be in very poor condition. The entire area was covered with ice and snow, making it difficult to determine if the poor condition was due to improper upkeep or to bomb damage. There were numerous cranes of various types on the quay, giving the impression that they had been accumulated wherever and whenever it was possible to obtain one. A small locomotive that burned pulverized coal was used on the quay. This locomotive was evidently considered quite unusual, for it attracted a group of onlookers every time it appeared. No pipe lines or oil storage facilities were observed.

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9. Naval Activity: A DD or DE-type ship was seen in Fratiq Harbor. There was a large sailing ship in this harbor which might have been a training ship. A buoy tender, that possibly was a Navy ship, was observed underway outside the harbor entrance. What were believed to be USSR Navy personnel were seen about what appeared to be a barracks in the vicinity of 46°29'N, 30°45'E. There definitely was very little naval activity in Odessa.
10. Military Activity: MIG type jet aircraft were seen in the air. Three is the most that were seen at one time. They did not fly every day. They did not seem to be based in the immediate vicinity, as they were never observed landing or taking off. No other aircraft was seen. Two searchlights swept the harbor all night every night. These were located at approximately 46°33'N, 30°46'E, and at 46°27'N, 30°46'E. Most of the young men in Odessa were in some kind of uniform. Immigration personnel wore epaulets that were predominantly green. Army personnel wore epaulets that were predominantly red. Police wore blue and red ones.

Comments by Navy Officer who interviewed sources: (1) Sources could not recall the exact dates in January 1954 that ~~their~~ ship was in Odessa; (2) HO Chart 4202 indicates a depth of 21' where sources' ship berthed while drawing 27' and a depth of 19' where the tanker drawing an estimated 30' berthed; (3) It seems unlikely that authorities returned the binoculars, etc, when the ship was still alongside the quay, as indicated by source. This information came from the source who was probably below when the gear that had been removed from the ship was returned; (4) The steredore foreman's remarks regarding his men's strong union and the union's policy of allowing unmanned gangs to work in order that each gang member might earn more make little sense to source or to interviewing officer; (5) The source that stated that he himself saw four or five Soviet passenger-type ships underway was the one who spent most of his time below. The other source indicated that there were many of these ships moving, but he would not state an approximate number. Considering their deck cargo, it seems very likely that these were troop ships; (6) Source felt that he could not give an accurate estimate of the number and type of cranes on the quay; (7) Although no pipe lines or oil storage facilities were observed, it must be noted that source did not go near Petroleum Harbor, and he had no binoculars; (8) The charts of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea that were aboard the MOSDALE before her change of flag and ownership were examined without finding anything of value; (9) Both sources stated that they gave information to "The Admiralty" when they returned to England from Odessa.

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